

Access the Web

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New technology always seems to be a hot topic in the library world, and while not exactly the *newest* technology RFID is certainly a hot topic. In case you haven't yet heard of it before, RFID stands for Radio Frequency Identification. Basically, it is a new way to barcode books and to manage a library's inventory; only it uses an electromagnetic field instead of a laser. These tags are capable of holding a large amount of information about an item and security gates can be used to trigger check-outs and check-ins, making these tags a bonus for busy circulation desks. However, the use of these tags has raised issues of patron privacy which continue to be debated by individuals in the library profession.

Where can you turn to find out more about RFID? How does it work? Where can you purchase RFID materials? What are the advantages or disadvantages of RFID? What other applications can RFID be used for? These are some of the questions being asked in libraries and other businesses about RFID. Check out the following websites for answers to those questions and more.

RFID for Libraries

<http://www.biblio-tech.com/html/rfid.html>

This is a good place to start for some *very* basic information on RFID and its use in libraries. If you want to become familiar with what RFID is, but don't want to delve into page upon page of details or read about the privacy debate, check out this Biblio Tech Review article. The article provides some background on what RFID is, discusses the different components and types of RFID, and gives information on pricing and vendors if you want to take that next step.

RFID Technology for Libraries

<http://www.ala.org/ala/pla/plapubs/technotes/rfidtechnology.htm>

Richard Boss's Tech Notes article was cited by so many people I decided to check it out. He covers in detail what RFID is, the advantages and disadvantages of using RFID in a library setting, and what the components of an RFID system are. He also discusses budgeting for RFID (information you may need for the administrative types), as well as vendors selling RFID systems. I especially liked the section where Boss compared the different vendors systems, which I felt could help you make a vendor decision based on need rather than someone's sales pitch.

RFID Journal

<http://www.rfidjournal.com/>

If you work frequently with RFID or need more detailed information, then you might want to look around at this website. The claim on their website is that "RFID Journal is the only independent media company devoted solely to radio frequency identification and its many business applications. Our mission: to help companies use RFID technology to improve the way they do business." The website provides news, case studies, featured articles and white papers, a listing of RFID-related events, discussion boards, and lists of resources. Much of the information is freely available online, including an electronic newsletter; however, many of the articles and white papers are only available via a subscription to the print edition of the journal.

RFID

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RFID>

This is another examination of what RFID is, but instead of limiting itself to just its application in libraries discusses RFID in general. This article is a useful complement to pages discussing just the library aspect of RFID by placing such information in a larger context. The article discusses the history of RFID tags, the types of tags used, and the components of an RFID system. It also delves into potential uses, regulation and standardization, and the controversy surrounding the application of RFID. The information in this article appears to be accurate, but as the source is Wikipedia it is not 100% authoritative.

RFID in Libraries

<http://www.libraryrfid.net/wordpress/index>

This site is useful with keeping up with RFID on an ongoing basis, without having to delve deeply into research. This RFID blog continues to be updated, though more slowly now that the author no longer works directly with RFID. The purpose of this blog is to examine the application of RFID in libraries. The posts vary based on what happened to catch the author's fancy on a given day, but include news, standards, best practices, and use implications. And, if you like the blog and like to write, the author is looking for someone to take over the blog or it will be discontinued and archived this spring. This could be your chance!

RFID News and RFID Operations

<http://www.rfidnews.org/>

This website is similar to the RFID Journal, but less broadly focused and more bombarded by advertisements. You must subscribe to access articles in the library older than 60 days, but current articles are freely available. You can also sign up for a free monthly newsletter. The articles in the library are arranged by subject, which is handy if you are dealing with a specific issue and don't want to have to wade through mounds of general information about RFID. One of the most useful sections on this website is the vendor profiles, arranged by product type, which provide the contact information and a description of services and products for a number of RFID-related vendors.

RFID Gazette

<http://www.rfidgazette.org/>

The scope of this blog is varied, but seems to be heavy on news about specific vendors and the RFID commercial market; though it also includes news bits on how particular companies are applying RFID technology in their business practices. While providing useful and informative news on RFID, this blog is a bit heavily laden with Google ads on both sides of the screen that prove distracting when viewing the website. Also, not being specific to libraries, this site is most useful for those individuals heavily involved in working with RFID on a daily basis, who have a number of syndication options available to them.

The RFID Weblog

<http://www.rfid-weblog.com/>

Yes this is another RFID blog – one popular technology meeting another. However, there are some features of this blog, which is of more general use than the previous corporate minded blog. I especially like that the market and retail aspects of RFID are handled in their own sections. Also useful is the keyword search feature for the post archives as well as the link directory which arranges the links from the blog according to topic. Again, a number of syndication options are available for those individuals who want to closely monitor the posts on this site.

RFID – Radio Frequency Identification Chips and Systems

<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/ifissues/rfid.htm>

The ALA site serves as a clearinghouse of sorts for finding papers, articles and websites on the topic of RFID. It also provides information about the RFID discussion list, organizations opposing the misuse of RFID, an RFID bibliography and RFID news. This is a great place to come for one-stop shopping for RFID information, providing you the links to numerous RFID resources.

Spychips – RFID 1984

<http://www.spychips.com/>

This website is a project of CASPIAN, Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering. With the biggest RFID issue being privacy, by far, this site is not only useful for following developments and discussions of the privacy issue, but is entertaining as well. The site is keyword searchable, and visitors can sign up to receive the free newsletter. A topical arrangement of the site is in development. The Get Involved section provides information for individuals wishing to join the authors in their cause, and they have What You Can Do sections for consumers, lawmakers, and companies. There is a link to the companion blog and the companion book, Spychips: How Major Corporations and Government Plan to Track Your Every Move with RFID, is available via Amazon.com.